

## **FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE INCLUDES, PASSES THREE COLEMAN AMENDMENTS TO AUTHORIZATION BILL, INCLUDING ACTION BILL**

*Amendments will help reverse the decline of foreign students attending U.S. colleges, reauthorize funding for U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and call for UN reform and accountability.*

**March 3rd, 2005** - Washington, DC - Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee attached three amendments authored by Senator Norm Coleman to the 2006 Foreign Affairs Authorization bill. One amendment will add key provisions of Coleman's ACTION Act (American Competitiveness Through International Openness Now Act), legislation aimed at reversing the decline of foreign students attending U.S. colleges. The other two amendment will reauthorize funding for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and call for UN reform and better accountability. Coleman's amendments will now head to the Senate floor for consideration.

"I hope that the 2006 Foreign Affairs Authorization Bill will be the vehicle to drive these important initiatives to passage," said Coleman. "This bill is now headed to the Senate floor where I will continue to work to ensure these provisions make another step closer to becoming law."

To help America regain lost ground in attracting the world's best and brightest students, Coleman attached an amendment that enacts key components of his ACTION Act. This amendment will push for 4-year multiple entry visas for both international students studying in the U.S. and American students studying abroad; press for timely and transparent adjudication of student visas; refine visa policy to focus less time and energy on people who pose no risk and more time on those who do; improve inter-agency coordination; work to reduce the clerical burden on university administrators dealing with the SEVIS Student and Exchange Visitor Information Systems) system, and require certain statistics on visa processing to shed light on remaining problems.

"Unfortunately, many international students who study at our colleges face tough choices when there is a family emergency back home. If they leave they may never be able to return to their studies here in America," said Coleman. "I heard a lot about this issue in Minnesota, and I'd like to work on a solution that benefits both international and American students." Coleman added that he hopes to add additional provisions from the ACTION Act during the full Senate's debate of the bill.

The USCIRF is a federal government commission, created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, that monitors religious freedom in countries around the world and advises the President, the Secretary of State, and

Congress on how best to promote it. Coleman's amendment will reauthorize funding for this important commission at a level of \$3 million for 2006.

"The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom carries the message of religious tolerance throughout the world," said Coleman. "Reauthorizing their funding is very important as they serve the critical function of combating religious persecution wherever it occurs around the world."

Coleman's third amendment calls on the United Nations and U.S. diplomats to work towards accountability and transparency at the United Nations.

"My on-going Oil for Food investigations have shed light on one part of a bigger problem," Coleman said. "This amendment sends a clear message about the Senate's bipartisan commitment to improving accountability and transparency at the United Nations."

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